

VZCZCXYZ0000
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHBUL #2452/01 2321909
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 201909Z AUG 09
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0971
INFO RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 7811
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 3816
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

UNCLAS KABUL 002452

DEPT FOR AFGHAN ELECTIONS TASK FORCE

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: Afghan Elections Situation Report Nine - 12:00AM Local,
August 21, 2009

11. (SBU) The next sitrep is scheduled for 0400 local on August 21.

Atmospherics

12. (U) Canadian Embassy representatives had a brief discussion this evening with Seddiq Seddiqqi, Deputy Spokesperson for the Karzai Campaign, to solicit his views and perspectives on today's elections. Seddiqqi stated that the polling process had gone very smoothly, and indicated that the Karzai campaign is anxiously looking forward to the results. Apart from a report of candidate agent problems in Balkh (see paragraph 11), Seddiqqi reported that the campaign did not encounter any major problems - the security disruptions were not as severe as expected, and he felt that most Karzai supporters had been able to access the polls. Seddiqqi praised the work of the IEC, who he described as "well-trained", "professional", and "impartial". He believed that Karzai had done well in "almost all provinces", and re-iterated his belief that Karzai would win the race in the first round. He acknowledged Dr. Abdullah as a strong competitor, and so to Ashraf Ghani (albeit to a lesser extent), but remained confident that Karzai would emerge victorious.

13. Canadian Embassy representatives also had a late afternoon discussion with Omar Ansari, the campaign manager for Ashraf Ghani, to solicit his views on the outcomes of polling day. Ansari noted the security challenges across the country throughout the day, and cited specific threats made against the Ghani campaign by insurgents, government security personnel, and local warlord. Ansari singled out Kandahar (RC South) and Kunduz (RC North) as having been particularly violent, and asserted that the level of violence across the country, compounded by intimidation and threats, had prevented many Ghani supporters from participating in the elections. He went on to contend that in Kandahar Province locals had engaged in ballot stuffing. He argued that the violence in Kandahar was actually the result of a plot hatched by Karzai to prevent Ghani supporters from voting. Ghani, he insisted, is very much in the running. He accused Karzai of misusing state resources, and employing state officials to buoy his campaign. Ansari suggested that Ghani likely did best in Uruzgan (RC South), Farah (RC South), Kandahar (RC South), Paktia (RC East), Kabul (RC Capital), Kunar (RC East), Balkh (RC North), and Sar-e Pul (RC North), whereas he likely showed poorly in Baghdis (RC West) and Ghor (RC West).

14. (U) Provincial reports by region follow:

RC-South:

-- Zabul reports that streets and bazaars appeared to be quiet throughout the day. Voters, while limited in numbers, were enthusiastic, waving and showing their ink stained fingers to

observers and passing convoys.

RC-East:

-- Khost reports that the mood on the street of downtown Khost was almost celebratory, with people expressing strong support for the measures taken by the ANSF to secure the election.

RC-West:

-- A PRT observer in Badghis reported that an Abdullah campaign agent stated that the process in all districts of Badghis but Murgab was fair and transparent.

Voter Turnout

15. FEFA reported a preliminary impression that indicated a lower turnout compared to the 2004 Presidential election, in particular female turnout. FEFA also noted a lack of female electoral staff at "many" polling centers.

16. (U) Provincial reports by region follow:

RC-South:

-- Zabul reports that voter turnout throughout the province is reportedly low, although polls were kept open well past 1600 in some locations to allow for voters in line to vote. Word of the poll closing extension did not reach the IEC and ANSF until many polls had already closed. In one of two female polling locations in Qalat, women were observed voting, but in small numbers. Anecdotal

reports suggest overwhelming support for President Karzai.

-- Despite attacks, voter turnout in Uruzgan remained steady throughout the morning and a mobile polling station was established to reach those police and army officials who could not leave their assigned locations.

RC-East:

-- Nuristan reports estimates that some 4,000 ballots were cast today in the district of Barg-e Matal, equating to a voter turnout of 42 percent in an area that still faces significant pressure from anti-Afghan forces. The now-confirmed attack on one Barg-e Matal polling site today only closed the polls for an hour.

-- In Parwan province, by all accounts (including the IEC and Task Force Gladius patrol elements spread throughout the province), voter turnout was heavy. Lines were reported at polling centers throughout the morning province-wide. PRT officer accompanied Gladius headquarters commanding officer around Bagram district and to Charikar. Traffic on main routes and in bazaars was extremely light, but we observed numerous people with inked fingers outside. All polling centers remained open as of 1500.

-- Khost reports widely divergent turnout across the province, with indications that insecure districts such as Sebari, Musa Khel, and Qalandar had very low turnout, although Spera may be a surprise outlier in this regard. However, in areas such as Matun, Mandozai, Tani, and Gorbuz, turnout appears to be quite high. In some of these areas, Khost reports that female turnout was 30-40% of that of men at some polling centers.

RC-West:

-- Herat reports that minimal if any elections violations were observed. The tremendous number of different party observers making sure that the process was honest and transparent. The turn-out of women everywhere was apparent and a great tribute to the women of Afghanistan's courage and tenacity.

Security

17. (U) Provincial reports by region follow:

RC-East:

-- Zabul reports that sporadic and ineffective indirect fire attacks were reported mainly in the morning in Atghar, Day Chopan, Nawbahar, Qalat and Shajoy districts. In all districts polling centers and stations remained open, with the exception of one center in Nawbahar which closed temporarily but reopened within the hour. Several IEDs were reported throughout the province. Overall, the enemy's persistent and effective intimidation and threats apparently kept voter turnout low. While the voting centers may have been secured, the prospect of returning to a Taliban controlled village with an ink stained finger may have been enough to discourage many voters.

-- Gardez reports that security was good at polling stations all day, with the notable exception of the Chamkani polling station where RPGs were fired at the polling station, but missed and killed two children. The insurgents firing the RPGs were not apprehended. In spite of the incident, residents continued to use their own voting cards and there did not appear to be any active intimidation during the late polling hours.

In Zormat District, Gardez insurgents fired five RPGs at a polling center after it had closed, hitting the center but there with no casualties. Eight other missiles hit the Kulal Gu ANSF-ISAF joint base nearby, once again with no casualties. During the day roads and alternatives routes were blocked by Taliban. The district governor responded by telling residents which alternative routes to take to reach the polls. ANA, ANP, ISAF and arbakai provided security throughout the day and remained at the polling center. There were no observers at the center due to poor security.

-- In Parwan there were three attempted rocket attacks reported around the province. Two in the vicinity of BAF (one in the morning, one in the early afternoon) did not result in any polling center closures. One rocket in Shinwari district did temporarily close a polling center in the morning, but the center was reopened shortly thereafter. We also visited the OCC-P in Charikar mid-day, where the Parwan COP, ANA 5/1 Kandak Commander, OCC-P Commander and other

senior officials were all calm and confident.

-- Khost reports that while incidents of indirect and direct fire continued throughout the day, such activity peaked by noon, and tapered off throughout the afternoon.

RC-South:

-- In Tarin Kowt, Uruzgan the situation has become tenser in the capitol city and elsewhere in the province as there have been at least three separate rocket attacks, the most recent fell near a police check-point, close to the governor's compound. Separately, the governor reported and a UN contact confirmed that the polling station in Hussinea, within Khas Uruzgan district, is surrounded by Taliban and attacking the station. Election workers are attempting to secure the sensitive election material and flee the location.

RC-West:

-- Herat reports that there were no incidents in the any districts. ANP was present without being overbearing at all sites, with polling center sites managed by capable and articulate managers.

Voting & Counting Activities

18. (U) FEFA, the domestic observation organization, issued an initial press release in the late afternoon based on the observation of its 7,368 observers - including 2,642 women. FEFA observers reported many polling centers opened late due to last minute administrative and technical issues and security concerns or closed temporarily for security incidents.

19. (U) Provincial reports by region follow:

RC-South:

-- Zabul reports that all polling centers and stations opened with only one center opening approximately an hour late, in Shamulzai Province about 3km from the Pakistan border. No reports were received of any polling centers improperly or inadequately staffed or supplied. The only logistical/operational difficulty appeared to be that the supplied hole punchers consistently broke. The IEC and ANSF did a professional and thorough job in the preparation and execution phases of the election. This is a credit to IEC and ANSF leadership and the meticulous and detailed planning that has occurred over the last 3-4 months in a province where 8 of 11 districts are heavily influenced/controlled by the Taliban.

RC-East:

-- In Parwan the PEO reported to the OCC-P late last night that six polling boxes in remote Kohe Safi were broken and unusable. He appealed to coalition forces to fly replacement boxes there. Although coalition forces were unable to assist, the ANA provided its own air assets to successfully deliver replacement boxes this morning.

RC-West:

-- Herat reports that the only common complaint was that the hole punchers used to indicate that voting was completed did not work very well.

Fraud

¶9. (U) FEFA reported observing malfunctioning hole punches - used to mark voter registration cards - in 15 provinces. The IEC responded by instructing polling staff to mark voter's registration cards with scissors. FEFA also reported interference by IEC staff with the voting process, but did not provide any specifics as to the type of interference or the extent to which it was witnessed.

¶10. Ghani's campaign manager cited examples of alleged fraud to a Canadian embassy representative that included:

- In the Qala-e-Ghazian neighborhood of Mazar-e Sharif, Balkh local strongman MP Eshaq Rahguzar threatened Ghani supporters, and demanded they support Dr. Abdullah;

- In some polling stations, IEC staff (reporting a shortage of ballots) directed people to ink their fingers and leave their registration cards behind; on the promise that the polling staff

would mark their ballots once replacements arrived;

- In the Palasposh region of Balkh he indicated that a local police commander named Nader, together with his soldiers, was ordering people by a polling station to vote for Abdullah;

- In Keshim district, Badakhshan, the district administrator was reported to have provided transportation to voters to the polls on condition that they vote for Karzai;

- In the Ahmad Shah Meena region of Kabul province, members of the Ahmadzai tribe (supposedly loyal to Ghani), resisted ANP efforts to close polling stations in their area;

- in Sar-e Pul, IEC official Segbhatullah Eshaqzai, was reportedly encouraging people to vote for Abdullah, and was arrested and detained by the ANP.

¶11. (U) Provincial reports by region follow:

RC-North:

-- The deputy spokesperson for the Karzai campaign noted to a Canadian Embassy representative that while overall voter turnout was very good, Karzai supporters faced minor problems throughout the country - Karzai candidate agents have reported instances of voter intimidation (which they attribute to the Abdullah camp), occurring mainly in Kabul and Mazar-e Sharif. The Karzai campaign claims to

have submitted formal complaints to the ECC, with respect to these incidents.

RC-East:

-- Khost reports a credible account of fraud at a polling center in Matun, where a provincial council candidate and presidential candidate representatives were actively campaigning in contravention of the election law. Additionally, voters at this same station reportedly cast multiple ballots and were not prevented from doing so by polling station staff.

Public Affairs

12. (U) PUBLIC AFFAIRS UPDATES:
AFGHAN MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Other Top Stories:

-The leading story in the Afghan media was the coverage of the press conference by President Karzai on the successful conclusion of the election day. Karzai thanked IEC, ANA, ANP, and NDS for helping to make the Afghan elections happen across Afghanistan. Karzai also thanked Afghan people who voted despite intimidation by the Taliban, IED explosions, suicide bombing and armed attacks across Afghanistan. He said according the reports he got from MOI, 73 incident occurred in 15 provinces of Afghanistan causing civilians and ANSF casualties.

-The second leading story in the Afghan media was the coverage of the joint press conference by chairman of the Independent Election Commission Azzizullah Luddin, Afghan Defense Minister Rahim Wardak, Afghan Interior Minister Hanif Atmar and the National Director of Security Amrullah Saleh in which they announced conclusion of the election day successfully.

-RTA reported that Dr. Abdullah said he will submit his complaints about the voting process to the Electoral Complaints Commission. The report also mentioned that Abdullah seemed to be pleased with the results of the elections so far.

-Shamshad TV reported that Ambassador Eikenberry visited a number of polling centers in Kabul city today. During the visit, Eikenberry stated that people were voting freely in the elections and that elections were being held in a transparent manner.

-Afghan media widely reported that voting process extended by one hour across Afghanistan to allow more people to vote and will officially concludes at 05:00PM today.

-VOA reported on comments by the State Department spokesman in which he said that the Taliban campaign to disrupt Afghan elections will fail.

-Ariana TV reported that higher number of women than men voted in Zabul province. The reports said that a big number of men did not vote because they believed that their vote will not make any difference.

-Shamshad TV reported that unlike the expectations, a great number of women voted in Helmand provinces.

-Tolo TV also reports on optimism and large numbers of women participating in the voting process in Pul-e-Khomri, the capital of northern Baghlan province.

-Pajhwok News reported that bad quality ink is being used in two polling stations in Kabul. Ramadan Bashardost, one of the presidential candidates, said that the ink came off easily and called it a fraud.

-A Tolo TV reporter from central Maidan Wardak province quotes residents as saying that the ink used in marking the voters is removable. According to report, polling centers in some other districts of the province were still not clearly identified by the

provincial Independent Election Commission (IEC) and people did not know where to go to vote.

-Tolo TV in central Bamyan province reports participation of boys under the age of 18 (not voting age) in the voting process. A reporter says he saw boys under age 15 coming to polling stations to vote. The reporter also says he saw cars with the pictures of some candidates tagged on their windshields stopping in front of groups of people walking towards polling stations. According to the reporter, people inside these cars were asking people to go with them to the polling stations and vote for the candidates whose pictures were tagged on their cars.

-A Tolo TV reporter in eastern Nangarhar province says he saw groups of people walking towards polling centers to vote. The TV presenter reports that a lack of voting materials at some polling stations in remote districts of northern and southern Afghan provinces are hampering the election.

-A Tolo TV reporter from western Herat reports on a lack of polling stations in the province, quoting residents as saying that they had to wait hours at the polling stations to vote. The reporter says the city of Herat was under a tight security precaution and that the police and national army forces could be seen everywhere in the city searching cars and people.

-Pajhwok Afghan News reported on a lack of police presence in 90 polling sites in Ghor province. The IEC and the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission confirmed the report and expressed concern over the fairness of elections in the province.

-BBC reported that 31 polling sites were closed in Gardez, Zurmat and Jani Khail districts of Paktia province due to security concerns. Provincial security officials said that security threats and the fact that the IEC staff did not report for work were the reasons for the closure.

-BBC reported that two people were killed when a rocket landed near a polling station in Helmand province. Taliban claimed the responsibility for the attack.

-Tolo TV reports from southeastern Paktia on fires in Gardez. According to the reporter, two rockets were fired on the city this morning and landed in non-residential areas. The reporter also says residents in groups were walking towards polling stations to vote. There were no casualties.

-Radio Azadi reported on three explosions in Kabul this morning. The Ministry of Defense confirmed the report and said there were no casualties.

-Tolo TV: A resident of the capital Kabul in interview with Tolo TV reporter says he was fed up with poverty and will carry out a suicide attack unless the government does something to improve his living condition. Another angry resident of Kabul criticized the current government for failing to improve the lives of ordinary people, saying he is undecided who to vote for and that he might not even go to the polling box and vote. Yet another resident of Kabul says he was happy to take part in the elections, which is an important opportunity for all Afghans.

-Ariana TV reported that the Afghan police confiscated a car laden with explosives in Logar province.

-Pajhwok Afghan News reported that two suicide bombers were arrested in Takhar province. According to security officials, the suicide bombers were attempting to attack polling sites in the province.

-An editorial published by Pajhwok News Agency summarized security and human rights concerns, concerns, the recent candidate withdrawals, and UN Special Representative Kai Eide's and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's statements on the Afghan Elections.

-Tolo TV showed a new video clip in which Gulbudin Hikmatyar, the leader of Hizb-e Islami, sets conditions for bringing an end to the war in Afghanistan: the unconditional withdrawal of international troops; establishment of a provisional government; holding of free and transparent elections.

-Tolo TV reports from southeastern Paktia on fires in Gardez. According to the reporter, two rockets were fired on the city this morning and landed in non-residential areas. The reporter also says residents in groups were walking towards polling stations to vote. There were no casualties.

¶13. (U) Messaging remains consistent with 8pm Afghan Elections Situation Report eight. We will review and update as necessary for the next report.

EIKENBERRY